



*The Council of the
Parish of Esh*

Minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the council

Held on Wednesday 11th September 2024 at the Miners Institute, Langley Park

Meeting commenced at 6 p.m.

Item 1 Record of Attendance:

Cllr Ollie Moat (Chair), Cllr Allison Wardman (Vice Chair), Cllr Edwin Simpson, Cllr Kathryn Thompson, Cllr Jillian Crumbie, Cllr Pat Short, Cllr Jackie Clark, County Cllr Bev Coult.

There were 4 members of the public present.

Item 2 Apologies for absence:

Cllr John Duddy, Cllr Andy Walker, Cllr Mike Quinn, Cllr Carole Greenham-Denny.

Item 3 Declarations of Interest:

Cllr Crumbie, item 10. Cllr Thompson item 13

Resolved: councillor items of interest noted

Item 4 Minutes of previous Ordinary meeting on 12th June 2024:

The minutes from the ordinary meeting held on July 10th had been circulated to councillors via email, prior to this meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Simpson that it be noted that the minutes are a true and accurate representation, this was seconded by Cllr Wardman.

Resolved: It be noted that the draft minutes are a true and accurate representation of the meeting on 10th July 2024.

Item 5 Opportunity for members of the public to raise matters of interest:

There were four members of the public present, 3 from Langley Park Allotment Association and 1 local resident. The local resident raised the issue of parking in Browney Court. At present this is not a resident's only parking area. The parking spaces are being used by members of the public and by staff from the local nursing home and doctor's surgery, which impacts upon spaces that are for the residents of the bungalows. Many of these residents are elderly and infirm and cannot walk great distances. The local resident has been pursuing that the area be made a residents only private

parking area and asked if there was anything that Esh Parish Council could do to assist. It was agreed that Esh Parish Council could make a request with the Land Registry in respect of land ownership.

An email had been received from a resident in Esh Village regarding the state of some of the plants in the planters around the village. It was stated that some of the plants had not been watered and were dying as a result. It was clarified that the only planters belonging to Esh Parish Council were at the entrance/ exit points of the village and one in the centre. These alongside other planters/ hanging baskets around the parish were being watered by the contractor which was evident as they were in full bloom. It was thought that the other planters had been planted by other sources.

Resolved: in relation to the first enquiry, Esh Parish Council are awaiting confirmation of land ownership, this is ongoing and the resident will keep Esh Parish Council informed of any progress.

The second enquiry, the clerk will contact the contractors to establish which planters are the responsibility of Esh Parish Council.

Item 6 County Councillors report:

County Councillor Coult presented her report which highlighted various schemes and events happening across the whole of County Durham including a trial on free school meals, CQC rating provision for adult social care as being good across County Durham and details of free courses across County Durham which are provided by Durham Learn local issues such as proposed locations for EV chargers, parking services to visit Langley Park and various works that were proposed or underway across the parish. It was noted that County Councillor Coult was thanked for her comprehensive report by Cllr Simpson.

Resolved: to accept County Councillor Coult's report.

Item 7 Clerks' report:

The clerk's report had been distributed to councillors prior to the meeting and included information such as the ongoing Civil Money Claims case, the CCJ has been served and the clerk sought clarification on the next steps. By consensus of councillors, it was agreed that the clerk look into costs of enlisting court bailiffs to retrieve the money owed.

The clerk has had feedback from the auditing company in regards to the AGAR, there were some questions around deviances in monies during 2023/24 as compared with those from 2022/23, this was explained by the cost to Esh Parish Council of the refurbishment of Quebec play area. The Excise of Public Rights was carried out and all financial information was on display on the parish web site and at The Miner's Institute for a six-week period from 28th June until 9th August. There were no enquiries from the public in regards to viewing the documentation.

The report also included training that the clerk has undertaken as part of her role.

Resolved: To accept clerks report

Item 8 Allotment/ Small Holding Inspections (moved from item 10 on agenda by chair):

The large gardens/ smallholdings leased by Esh Parish Council have been subject to inspections. All of the tenants were informed prior to inspections. Some tenants received written notification to improve. These gardens have had subsequent inspections and it has been noted that there is an improvement, such as hedges cut back, an exit removed and returned to fencing. However, there

are still outstanding elements such as the stream to be routed to its original course and a caravan that needs to be removed. The clerk is to write a follow up letter to inform the tenant of the issues still outstanding. The vacant large garden has now been let and the new tenants have begun to tidy up the site. Esh Parish council has purchased signage stating that the land is private, this has been installed in the hope of eliminating the large allotment being used as a thoroughfare. There were questions over the ownership of the stream running through some of the large gardens as some residents think it belongs to Karbon Homes. The clerk will look into ownership because it could also belong to Northumbrian Water as a run off for storm water from the gully on the estate.

It was mentioned that another of the large gardens had excessive ivy growth over a tree on the site. The clerk is to contact contractors with the view of getting the ivy removed from the tree and killing it to prevent regrowth.

The allotments at the Earl of Durham and Crossfell sites have been inspected by parish councillors as per pending management agreement. To pass an inspection all plots need to be viewed, one remains unseen at the time of meeting. There have been several recurring issues with 6-8 allotment plots which have failed the inspection. This was due to factors such as, high hedges, too many sheds, too much wood being stored (suggesting it was for business use), plots being overgrown and unkempt, storage of gas bottles and having metal containers on site. Some of the plots have been very well kept and are exemplary. The clerk is to issue the tenant with the unseen allotment plot with a new date and time to carry out the inspection, highlighting the fact if they don't comply then they are in breach of their tenancy agreement with Langley Park Allotments Association. It was noted that they could have a representative open it if they were unavailable.

Some of the overgrown plots back onto houses which causes issues with over hanging trees, bushes and weed spread into the residences. Points have been raised by the tenants of the allotments over parish council involvement now opposed to apathy in the past, this was noted and explained the state of the allotments and large gardens had been brought to the attention of Esh Parish Council from the Neighbourhood Wardens who'd reported episodes of fly tipping. Councillors acknowledged that representation from Esh Parish Council had changed and that the new management agreement held expectation from both parties.

Resolved: The clerk to contact individual tenants to arrange alternative inspection dates and will correspond with those tenants whose plots failed the inspection. Also to inform small holding tenants of matters outstanding from follow up inspections.

Item 9 Management Agreement with LPAA (originally item 8 on agenda)

Esh Parish Council are in the process of renewing the management agreement with Langley Park Allotments Association, the new agreement is in draft form and has been circulated to parish councillors prior to the meeting taking place and to trustees of PLAA during the meeting. Clause B1 of the agreement was discussed and clarified that 50 % of the plot be given for cultivation purposes. A representative from LPAA raised the issue of pigeon lofts, this was clarified as, as long as they fall within the 25% remit allowed current tenants would be able to keep them however, they would not be allowed for new tenants, therefore phasing them out. It was also noted that at the moment boundaries and shared access points to Earl of Durham sites are in a poor state and need to be cleared. Cllr Moat proposed that the draft management agreement be adopted by Esh Parish Council, this was seconded by Cllr Short. A vote was taken which Cllr Crumie abstained from. The vote returned unanimously in favour of the draft management agreement being adopted. LPAA requested that a meeting be held with Esh Parish Council, once they have read through the Management Agreement.

Resolved: Esh parish Council adopt the draft management agreement as their binding agreement with LPAA.

Item 10 ROSPA report (originally item 9 on agenda)

In July ROSPA carried out inspections of all of the play areas around the parish, report of which were circulated amongst councillors. Several areas that the reports highlighted have been addressed such as detritus from birds, this has been solved by placing bird spikes on the swings which has stopped the birds from landing. The areas have been subject to thorough cleaning by power washing the areas.

Resolved: play areas are now subject to weekly litter pick and monitoring report from handy person.

Item 11 Bobby Robson Play Area:

Esh Parish Council have plans to refurbish The Bobby Robson play area and have received quotes from contractors to facilitate this. The quotes are in three phases which were distributed to councillors prior to the meeting. After a discussion it was decided that funding avenues be sought to assist with costs and that this would be deferred to the next meeting in October. This was proposed by Cllr Wardman and seconded by Cllr Moat and a unanimous vote returned.

Resolved: Clerk to send artists visual to councillors and make enquiries about funding.

Item 12 Quotes for scheduled works (fencing, garage door):

The clerk has sought quotes from three contractors in respect of continuing the V-mesh fence to the small holdings. One contractor was chosen from the three on offer, it was proposed by Cllr Moat that Esh Parish Council employs this contractor as the workmanship from them is excellent, this was seconded by Cllr Wardman. A vote was taken which was unanimous.

There was one quote for the garage door, despite the clerk approaching companies. Cllr Simpson proposed that the company providing the quote be given the contract for the garage door, because other avenues had been tried without success. Cllr Moat seconded this and again a unanimous vote was returned.

Resolved: Clerk to contact the companies involved to inform them of contracts being awarded to them.

Item 13 Baby Bank grant application):

Esh Parish Council have received a n application for a grant to assist to cover costs from the baby bank that is situated within the Miner's Institute. All relevant documentation was received and was shared amongst councillors. The current name of the baby bank includes Bearpark in their name because of their location when set up. The application was discussed and it was concluded that Esh Parish Council had no object to granting the application, however their concern was that councillors thought that the inclusion of Bearpark in the title of the group would suggest to the general public that only Bearpark residents would benefit from the group. The clerk has been informed that the

group do intend to change their name which was conveyed to councillors. It was decided that this application would be deferred until clarity was sought in regards to the name change.

Ongoing: Clerk to convey thoughts of councillors to Building Bearpark Community Partnership and seek clarity regarding name change.

Item 14 Boxes for Rec/ Heather on Rec:

To help with the conservation of birds and bats, it was suggested that bird and bat boxes be installed to sturdy trees. These boxes will provide habitat and nesting sites for the wildlife present at the Rec.

There was also an update regarding the heather on the Rec, Cllr Thompson has sought advice from a conservation specialist who has stated that the heather must be cut back to encourage regrowth. This is to be done in patches over a period of 12 months. Councillors were happy for the clerk to seek quotes for the bat and bird boxes.

It was also discussed about the state of the track on the Rec being overgrown. It was proposed by Cllr Moat to seek quotes for clearing of the track on the Rec, this was seconded by Cllr Crumbie. A vote was taken which was returned as unanimous.

Resolved: Clerk to contact companies for the supply of bird/ Bat boxes and a contractor to fit them in the Rec. Clerk to seek quotes for clearing paths on the Rec, which will be presented at Octobers' meeting.

Item 15 Newsletter:

The latest version of Esh Leaves had been circulated to councillors via email. It was noted that Cllr Greenham-Denny was thanked for the effort that she made to create a comprehensive newsletter. There were some amendments to make such as the article about Bearpark baby bank being for the whole of the parish and surrounding area rather than just Bearpark as the name suggests.

Resolved: Amendments to be made to the newsletter, once completed, clerk to contact printing company with an order to print the newsletter.

Item 16 Football update:

There have been three sessions of football taking place during the summer holidays. These have been well attended and there is a long-term aim to start a football team for next season.

Resolved: Esh Parish Council to support the generation of a football team for young people.

Item 17 Goals at The Rec and Old Esh:

The recent ROSPA report highlighted that the goals at the Rec and Esh Village are in a poor state of repair. Clerk to seek costs both to repair or replace the existing goals.

Resolved: Clerk to bring costs of repair and replace to the next meeting.

Item 18 Table and benches at parks/ roadside towards Kaysburn:

Esh Parish Council have received reports of the benches along the road to Kaysburn being uncomfortable to sit on. These benches are very popular with people walking. There are four benches along this walkway, councillors thought three of the four belonged to Esh Parish Council and the other to County Council. It was agreed that the clerk would approach County Councillor Coult to establish ownership and to see if there was funding available to replace them, this is to be deferred until next month.

There is also a picnic bench at Quebec play area that was highlighted in the ROSPA report as being a finger trap hazard. The clerk will seek prices to replace this with a one that conforms to ROSPA regulations.

Ongoing: Clerk to establish ownership of the benches by contacting County Councillor Coult and to seek prices of replacing the picnic bench at Quebec.

Item 19 Forthcoming events – Halloween and Remembrance Sunday:

Last Halloween, Esh Parish Council held a Halloween disco for under 7's, the disco wasn't well attended, however the feedback from those attending was positive. The question was raised about having another event, however due to the cost per head being large from last year's event and having no volunteers to lead the event, it was decided that Esh parish Council wouldn't stage an event this year. Remembrance Sunday was discussed, it was unanimous that Esh parish Council purchase more lamp post poppies, enough for coverage throughout the parish, not just Langley Park. Also, six wreaths are to be purchased for the churches, cenotaph and The Wetlands. It was agreed that Cllr Short lay the wreath at the cenotaph on behalf of Esh Parish Council and other roles would be distributed next month. The clerk will invite the guides to be present at the services. Christmas was discussed but by general consensus it was decided to defer this until next month.

Resolved: Clerk to order wreaths and lamp post poppies and to contact the guides leader to invite them to services on Remembrance Sunday.

Item 20 warm Spaces:

Cllr Moat highlighted the fact that some pensioners across the parish will not receive the winter fuel allowance from the government as they will be over the threshold. Cllr Moat has specified that a plan is to be constructed in the case of need. Cllr Moat is going to put a plan together.

Resolved: Cllr Moat to submit a plan for a warm space hub.

Item 21 Displaying of agenda and minutes around the parish

The clerk is in receipt of emails from a parishioner that state that Esh Parish Council are in breach of mandatory duties of displaying agenda and minutes around the parish, they believe that all notice boards around the parish should display them and that they were going to escalate this matter by

involving the press. There is also CCTV footage of this parishioner defacing the notice board at The Miner's Institute. The clerk has sought guidance from CDALC which stated that the statutory position for parish councils in regards to displaying minutes and agenda is online only, however they would recommend the good practise of displaying them in one prominent area in the parish. This was conveyed to councillors and it was stated that as Esh Parish Council already complied with the best practise model then this would continue.

Resolved: Clerk to continue to publish agenda and minutes online and at the notice board at The Miner's Institute. Printed copies are also available at The Miner's Institute upon request. Clerk to inform parishioner of the outcome.

Item 22: Payments to be made and bank reconciliation

The clerk distributed information on payments made, petty cash income / balance and bank balances for councillors to take note.

Resolved: Accounts are correct and that payments are authorised by the Council.

Item 23. Date of next ordinary meeting:

The date of the next ordinary meeting for Esh Parish Council is Wednesday 9th October 2024.